

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
L-03 PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 OMB-01
MCE-00 TRSE-00 IGA-02 /064 W
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R 191215Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 463
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GABORONE 1927

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS MASS UK BC
SUBJECT: SECURITY ASSISTANCE FOR BOTSWANA

REF: A) GABORONE 1645, B) GABORONE 1808 C) GABORONE 1823 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. UK HICOM TURNER ARRANGED A PRIVATE MEETING FOR ME AUGUST 16 WITH BRIGADIER GRAY AND MAJOR SWANN, WHO WERE HERE TO CARRY OUT THE SURVEY OF BOTSWANA DEFENSE FORCE DESCRIBED IN REF A. IN PREVIOUS WEEK, TEAM HAD VISITED BDF HEADQUARTERS IN GABORONE AND BDF CAMPS IN FRANCISTOWN AND SELEBI-PIKWE AS WEKK AS TOURING BORDER AREAS IN THAT REGION. THEY ALSO WENT TO KASANE TWO DAYS AFTER RHODESIAN ATTACK (REF B). BRIGADIER IAN KHAMA ACCOMPANIED THEM THROUGHOUT VISIT. THE UK TEAM REVIEWED IN DETAIL AND WILL MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON BDF ORGANIZATION AND EQUIPMENT NEEDS. THEY FOUND GOB OFFICIALS AND BDF LEADERS "ENTIRELY REASONABLE" IN THEIR REQUESTS. UK HICOM PROMISED US COPIES OF TEAM REPORT WHICH WILL NOT BE READY FOR 3-4 WEEKS. UK TEAM MEMBERS WERE IMPRESSED WITH BDF AND WITH EXEMPLARY COOPERATION THEY RECEIVED. END SUMMARY.

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2. UK HICOM WILFRED TURNER INVITED ME TO A PRIVATE BRIEFING AUGUST 16 BY BRIGADIER GRAY AND MAJOR SWANN WHO HAD VIRTUALLY COMPLETED, AFTER ONE WEEK, THEIR SURVEY OF BDF. AFTER LOOKING AT BDF HEADQUARTERS, THEY SPENT FOUR DAYS VISITING INSTALLATIONS IN FRANCISTOWN AND SELEBI-PIKWE, INCLUDING A DAY'S DRIVE ALONG THE RHODESIAN

BORDER DURING WHICH THEY ENCOUNTERED A BDF PATROL. THE TEAM WENT ON TO FAR NORTH (KASANE AREA) JUST THREE DAYS AFTER THE FIRST RHODESIAN ATTACK (REF B) AND PREVIOUS). BRIGADIER GRAY OUTLINED WHAT HE INTENDS TO RECOMMEND IN HIS REPORT CONCERNING BDF ORGANIZATION AND EQUIPMENT. UK HICOM PROMISED US A COPY OF THEIR REPORT. FOLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS OF THEIR VISIT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

3. GENERAL. OVERALL, THE UK MILITARY TEAM DESCRIBED BDF AS "REMARKABLE" CONSIDERING IT HAD BEEN CREATED ONLY FOUR AND ONE-HALF MONTHS EARLIER. TEAM FOUND BDF WELL-DISCIPLINED AND CONSCIENTIOUS ALTHOUGH LACKING IN TRAINING. BDF LEADERS WERE DESCRIBED AS THOUGHTFUL AND REASONABLE IN ANALYZING THE THREAT THEY FACE AND HOW THEY CHOOSE TO MEET IT, E.G., THE TEAM WAS REASSURED BY BDF DETERMINATION TO AVOID SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS SUCH AS MISSILES OF ANY KIND AND HEAVY EQUIPMENT. THE BDF MISSION AT PRESENT IS CONFINED LARGELY TO (A) BATROLLING THE RHODESIAN BORDER WITH EMPHASIS ON FRANCISTOWN AREA, AND (B) PROTECTING REFUGEE CAMPS. BDF ASSUMES (RIGHTLY, IN THE OPINION OF THE UK TEAM) THAT THE CAMPS ARE THE NUMBER ONE TARGET OF RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES. THE TEAM SAID THEY DID NOT CONSIDER BDF SECURITY MEASURES TO BE "OVER-REACTING".

4. FRANCISTOWN/SELEBI-PIKWE SITUATION. IN VIEW OF THE
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RHODESIAN THREAT TO THE AREA, THE BDF CONTINGENTS IN FRANCISTOWN AND SELEBI-PIKWE ARE LARGELY DEVOTED TO PROTECTING REFUGEE CAMPS AND MANNING THE EIGHT ROADBLOCKS SET UP ON ALL MAJOR ACCESS ROADS ROUND FRANCISTOWN. UK TEAM SAID THEY FOUND BDF DOING A GOOD, PROFESSIONAL JOB DESPITE RUDIMENTARY EQUIPMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, THE ROADBLOCKS CONSIST OF A LOG LAID ACROSS TWO BARRELS; IN EACH CASE, HOWEVER, SEVERAL ARMED RIFLEMEN WERE STATIONED BEYOND THE ROADBLOCK READY TO STOP (BY SHOOTING) ANYONE WHO DID NOT RESPECT IT. THE TEAM'S CONCERN WITH CAMP GUARD DUTY WAS THAT THE BDF SOLDIERS HAD BEEN AT IT FOR SEVERAL MONTHS WITH NO LEAVE, INDEED NO BREAK IN THE DUTY SCHEDULE. IF THERE WAS NO CHANGE OF PACE, THE UK TEAM FEARED SOLDIERS WOULD TIRE, LOSE THEIR MOTIVATION AND "ONE DAY THROW DOWN THEIR RIFLES AND GO BACK TO FARMING".

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GABORONE 1927

5. PATROLS. UK TEAM SAID THERE ARE TWO BDF PATROLS
IN ACTION ON RHODESIAN BORDER AT ANY TIME. THE TEAM
MET ONE SUCH PATROL WHEN TOURING THE BORDER AND HAD A
CHANCE TO DISCUSS THEIR MISSION. ACCORDING TO THE TEAM,
THE PATROLS ARE CONDUCTED PRUDENTLY AND WITH
SURPRISINGLY GOOD COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION. TEAM
MEMBERS SAID THEY HAD BEEN SHOWN EVERY EVIDENCE OF
RHODESIAN CROSS-BORDER INCERSIONS INCLUDING BULLET HOLES IN DWELLINGS

,
EVIDENCE OF GRENADES, ETC. THE UK TEAM LEFT IMPRESSION
THAT THE BDF PATROLS HAVE INSTRUCTIONS TO RESPECT
RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES, TO REPORT PROMPTLY WHEN THEY
SPOT RHODESIANS BUT NOT TO TRY TO ENGAGE THEM GIVEN
SUPERIOR RHODESIAN NUMBERS AND STRENGTH.

6. KASANE REGION. UK TEAM ARRIVED IN KASANE AREA
JUST THREE DAYS AFTER THE RHODESIAN ATTACK DESCRIBED REF B.
ACCORDING TO BOTH BRIGADIER GRAY AND MAJOR SWANN,
THERE WAS AMPLE EVIDENCE THAT A MORTAR ATTACK HAD TAKEN
PLACE, I.E., CRATERS WERE SEEN, AT LEAST ONE PIN OF A MORTAR
WAS FOUND WHICH TEAM IS TAKING BACK TO LONDON FOR
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IDENTIFICATION, WITNESSES INTERVIEWED SEPARATELY DESCRIBED
EVENTS IN WAYS THAT WERE MUTUALLY REINFORCING. THE
ESSENTIAL FACTS WERE THAT MORE THAN 100 RHODESIAN SECURITY
FORCES ARRIVED IN PERSONNEL CARRIERS ON A HILLSIDE NEAR
THE KAZANGULA FERRY WHERE RHODESIA, ZAMBIA AND BOTSWANA

BORDERS MEET. THE RHODESIANS, VARIOUSLY ESTIMATED AT 100-150 ARMED SOLDIERS, MOVED TO FOUR BUNKER-LIKE DEFENSE POINTS FACING THE RIVER AND OPPOSITE THE ZAMBIAN BUNKERS AND A SINGLE BOTSWANA DEFENSE POINT. FROM THE CRATERS LEFT BY MORTAR FIRE, THE UK TEAM COULD SEE THE EVIDENCE OF MORTARS HAVING BEEN FIRED IN FOUR SUCCESSIVE ROUNDS, THE FIRST WELL OVER THE BDF DEFENSE POINT, WITH THE SECOND, THIRD AND FOURTH ROUNDS PROGRESSIVELY CLOSER. THE UK TEAM THOUGHT IT /EXTREMELY LUCKY" THAT NO ONE WAS INJURED. THEY ASKED A BDF SOLDIER WHETHER HE HAD RETURNED FIRE; THE SOLDIER REPLIED THAT HE HAD. IN TALKING TO THOSE PRESENT, THE UK TEAM HAS CONCLUDED THAT FIRING BEGAN FROM THE RHODESIAN SIDE, WAS RETURNED FIRST BY THE ZAMBIAN MILITARY, THEN RESUMED FROM THE RHODESIAN SIDE AGAINST BOTH ZAMBIA AND BOTSWANA DEFENSE POINTS, CONTINUING FOR SOME 45 MINUTES AFTER WHICH THE RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES RETURNED TO THEIR VEHICLES AND LEFT THE SCENE, DETERRED IN PART BY GRASS FIRES WHICH BROKE OUT ON RHODESIAN SIDE. THE RHODESIANS REPORTEDLY RETURNED AND REPEATED THE ATTACK THE FOLLOWING DAY. THE UK TEAM MEMBERS WERE AT A LOSS TO EXPLAIN THE PURPOSE OF THE ATTACK BY THE RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES. THEIR SPECULATION AS TO MOTIVES RANGED FROM (1) A DESIRE OF A LOCAL COMMANDER TO "SHOW WHO IS BOSS", TO (2) A CALCULATED ATTEMPT TO INTIMIDATE BOTH GOB AND GOZ MILITARY IN THE REGION.

7. ORGANIZATION AND EQUIPMENT. BRIGADIER GRAY SAID HE WAS GREATLY REASSURED BY THE REASONABLE ATTITUDE OF BDF OFFICIALS CONCERNING EQUIPMENT; THEY EXPRESSED INTEREST IN CONFIDENTIAL

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RIFLES, MORTAR, MACHINE GUNS AND PERHAPS SOME ANTI-TANK WEAPONS. THEY ARE CONSIDERING GENERAL PURPOSE MACHINE GUN FOR ANTI-AIRCRAFT DEFENSE. THEIR OTHER MAJOR NEED IS FOR VEHICLES; THEY ARE LOOKING INTO A SPECIAL LAND ROVER BUILT BY SHORTS OF BELFAST. THEY ARE ALSO LOOKING INTO A WHEELED-ARMORED VEHICLE BUT SPECIFICALLY STATED THEY WANTED NO VEHICLE MORE SOPHISTICATED THAN WHAT IS KNOWN AS "FOX". AS FOR PERSONAL EQUIPMENT (UNIFORMS, ETC.), THE BDF IS LOOKING INTO WHAT THE UK HAS TO OFFER. THEY HAVE IDENTIFIED A DRY RATION MADE IN SOUTH AFRICA WHICH IS ADEQUATE FOR ONE PERSON AT LESS THAN SIXTY CENTS PER DAY. PRESENTLY SOLDIERS ARE GIVEN MONEY TO SHOP AT LOCAL STORES FOR THEIR FOOD NEEDS. CONFIRMING EARLIER REPORT (REF A), TEAM SAID THE BDF HAS ORDERED THREE DEFENDER AIRCRAFT WHICH THEY DESCRIBED AS "IDEAL" FOR BDF NEEDS. IAN KHAMA EXPRESSED INTEREST IN EVENTUALLY ACQUIRING HELICOPTERS BUT SAID HE WAS DELAYING UNTIL BOTSWANA PILOTS WERE TRAINED TO OPERATE THE NEW AIRCRAFT. SOME ARMY ENGINEERING CAPABILITY WAS BELIEVED ESSENTIAL, AT LEAST TO LAY AND CLEAR MINES AND TO BUILD RAFTS FOR

CROSSING RIVERS DURING RAINY SEASON. FINALLY, THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BDF THAT THE TEAM WILL RECOMMEND HAS BEEN DETERMINED. IT WILL CONSIST OF COMPANY-SIZED UNITS (ABOUT 100 MEN EACH), TWO PLATOONS OF WHICH WILL BE ON ACTIVE DUTY WHEREVER STATIONED, ONE ON HEADQUARTERS RESPONSIBILITIES AND ONE ON TRAINING AT ANY TIME. DETAILS OF TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZATION AND LOCATION OF ANTICIPATED 1200-MAN BDF WILL BE INCLUDED IN REPORT TO BE PREPARED AND SUBMITTED TO GOB WITHIN THE NEXT MONTH. (COPIES WILL BE POUCHED UPON RECEIPT.)

8. COMMENT. THE REACTION OF THE UK TEAM TO BDF WAS ENCOURAGING IN ALL RESPECTS: THEIR LEADERSHIP, RESPONSIVENESS TO POLITICAL GUIDANCE, DISCIPLINE, APPROACH TO AND EXECUTION OF THEIR MISSIONS. UK HICOM WAS ALSO GREATLY ENCOURAGED BY FRIENDLY WELCOME AND WHOLEHEARTED CONFIDENTIAL

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COOPERATION GIVEN THE UK TEAM WHICH, HE IS CONFIDENT, AUGURS WELL FOR THE FUTURE. HOWEVER, WE AGREE THAT THE ESSENTIAL STEPS REMAIN, NAMELY TO HELP GOB ACQUIRE THE EQUIPMENT IT NEEDS FOR BDF AND THEREBY CEMENT TIES OF COOPERATION THAT WILL ASSURE JOINT CLOSE, COOPERATIVE AND CONTINUING RELATIONS WITH BDF.
NORLAND

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